

Chris A. Linkenhoker  
525 Pear Tree Drive  
Corvallis, MT 59828

RECEIVED

DEC 11 2007

Ravalli County Commissioners

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County Commissioners  
Ravalli County Administrative Offices  
215 South 3<sup>rd</sup> Street  
Hamilton, MT 59840

Re December 12 Meeting with DEQ/Air Pollution

Dear Commissioners,

December 11, 2007

Please accept this written input on the subject of our valley's air pollution problem, in lieu of my desire to be present at the Wednesday 1 pm meeting with the State DEQ. Scheduling conflicts prevent me from attending.

**Attached is a photo of Hamilton that I took from the backyard of my residence on November 21. The reason for sending it to you is to again try to make some impact with the Commissioners on this serious subject, which I have failed to do in the past.**

**This view of the valley is very common and I do not believe that you or most of our citizens are aware of just how bad this air pollution problem is, and that valley residents are living in a sea of toxic air pollution, more days than not. The EPA/DEQ report has tied this subject significant research that shows quite disturbing health effects on your constituents and you have a duty to do something about it. This public health crisis is more important than subdivision deadlines or many other tasks that you strive with, but you are basically ignoring it.**

I wrote a formal letter to you on September 21 of this year about this problem and the connection between air pollution and the approval of large subdivisions. You have approved large subdivisions since receiving the letter and I saw no discussion about the air pollution problem as a decision criteria. Hence, I am assuming that my letter made no impact whatsoever and that the Commission is not concerned at all about this serious public health problem, despite succinct warnings from the EPA and DEQ over this past year.

I believe that the Commission needs to do a better job of protecting the health of your constituents, and that development has, and will continue to be a major factor in the declining air quality of our valley.

**If you put serious restrictions on the use of woodstoves, while simultaneously giving development a "free ride", then you are going to impact many low income residents who cannot afford alternative energy sources. If you put heavy restrictions on prescribed fire, you are going to increase the chances of future, catastrophic fire. If you do these things, you will simply increase the perception that special-interest developers drive the day-to-day decisions of the Commission, and create a feeling of cynicism and hopelessness in the very people who voted to change matters in last November's and this June's elections, which put three of you in your relatively, high paid government positions, six months ago.**

Sincerely,

C.L.

Chris A. Linkenhoker

239-6791 [clinkenhok@yahoo.com](mailto:clinkenhok@yahoo.com)

cc R. Jeffreys DEQ  
B. Habeck DEQ  
Bitterrooters for Planning

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Save the Bitterroot Conservation Coalition (S.B.C.C.)  
Chris A. Linkenhoker, Treasurer  
525 Pear Tree Drive, Corvallis, MT 59828  
Cell 239-6791  
[clinkenhok@yahoo.com](mailto:clinkenhok@yahoo.com)

Dear Ravalli County Commisioners,

September 21, 2007

Re Bitterroot Valley Air Pollution & Subdivision Approvals

This past summers fire season once again resulted in very serious air pollution problems for all of us and this scenario is unlikely to change in the future, as you well know. The EPA notified us back in February that we have a very serious problem year-round and that by even taking the effects of forest fire smoke out of the equation, the air quality is still deadly and many of your constituents are suffering and some are actually dying, prematurely. If you add forest fire smoke back into the equation, then we have extremely deadly pollution for folks with compromised health that requires immediate action on your part to protect the citizens of this valley. It is clear that the topography of the valley is especially conducive to trapping much of the pollution and it is especially serious during temperature inversions. The pollution comes from a number of sources and short-term mitigation measures are unlikely to result in measureable reductions. A full blown recovery plan that looks into the future is absolutely necessary if we are to avoid a health crisis.

The EPA warning letter gives the Commisioners the right, if not the obligation, to restrict activities that will make the air quality worse, including housing development, that is simply bringing more sources of air pollution into our valley.

I have read with interest the hard work that you are accomplishing to deal with the extreme numbers of planned subdivision and it appears as though current Montana state law is forcing the Commision to approve subdivisions that a majority of you may otherwise deny. It is my contention that federal law (Clean Air Act and National Environmental Policy Act) supercedes state subdivision laws and that the EPA notification can and should be used as a basis for denying subdivision approval until which time an air pollution recovery plan is completed and implemented. Any lawsuit brought forward concerning this issue would have very little problem showing "harm" to the plaintiffs, as every citizen of Ravalli County is in fact being harmed on a daily basis and thresholds of environmental significance have already been breached.

I have researched the health effects data from the EPA and would like to suggest that the Commision do the same. I believe that the data will shock you into pursuing a recovery plan more assertively. In the meantime, we need to be careful about allowing additional air pollution sources into the fabric of our everyday life.

A copy of the February EPA letter is attached for you benefit.

Sincerely,



Chris A. Linkenhoker  
Cc Bitterrooters for Planning